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Essay for the 2013 NASIG Horizon Award

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The Librarian as Designer: Creating Blueprints for Information Architecture

As I focused on writing this essay about the 2013 NASIG Conference theme, “The Art of Information/The Architecture of Knowledge,” I found myself snapping a picture of a draft workflow proposal I was working on and posting it to the photograph sharing application, Instagram. Instagram is popular with users for its ability to render artistic, professional looking photographs out of ubiquitous cell phone pictures. A new serials acquisitions workflow is not your average “instagrammable” subject. I discovered beauty in the art of information and the architecture of knowledge in the way the workflow simply, accurately, and effectively represented the blueprint of serials acquisitions in an academic library and felt compelled to share it. Art remains innately subjective, yet it is not hard to see artfulness in how I endeavor to collect, license, distribute, and preserve serials and other electronic resources for our library stakeholders. The foundation of libraries will always be built upon its strength of collections, but in the new information architecture being designed today, electronic resources are the cornerstone of their construction. By becoming an invested member in the larger information community through organizations, including NASIG, I strive to help influence how all the major players (or pieces) come together to create a masterpiece in the construction of information and the dissemination of knowledge.

I see the library not only as a brick and mortar building, which provides access to and houses a collection of materials to support scholarly objectives, but a hub for information creation and sharing. The library provides the building blocks, the foundations, to scholarship and education. As students, faculty, and scholars seek out the library for information to influence their research, I have the ability to significantly influence their successes. My role in the information community is to help ensure that the library customers have access, and continue to have access to the materials they need in order to reach their goals.

The basic blueprint for how knowledge is acquired and consequently shared within an academic institution is drawn upon by many different stakeholders. The foundation of knowledge in academe is information already accessible to its stakeholders. When scholars seek out a solution or explanation, they use information already manifested and created by previous scholars to influence their findings or rationalizations. Librarians play a significant role in cultivating and building a vast collection of these building blocks to foster the art of knowledge and understanding. I believe the technical services librarian is an important stakeholder in this process. I can shape the construction of knowledge by creating a clear blueprint for how information is collected, displayed, and preserved for future generations. After all, no work of art may be enjoyed if it is kept behind closed doors. Specifically, librarians have the ability to influence these factors in relation to electronic access to information through the licensing

process. As a technical services librarian with such licensing responsibilities, I can directly influence the architecture of knowledge by lobbying for meaningful, useful, and non-restrictive sharing of information for my stakeholders.

As scholars seek to share their findings with the information community, publishers and vendors play an intricate role in the construction of knowledge. The scholar-to-publisher-to-librarian relationships are crucial in making sure the foundation of knowledge is solid. These relationships must be grounded in the expectation that the sharing of any scholar's knowledge will be influential in the art of understanding. This blueprint sounds so easy to follow, but as I have found early on in this profession, there are constant setbacks, changes in plan, and renovations that take place throughout the process. Knowledge cannot be built in one day, and a serials professional must be equipped to manage all of the transformations that take place while the work is in progress.

As these stakeholders weave together an intricate web of knowledge, their research builds upon their predecessors' research in a way that continually influences the art of understanding. The "Aha!" moment is forever changing how information is created and consumed.

Through participation in communities such as NASIG, I aim to influence the knowledge and understanding of how my profession succeeds in building a network of access to all the tools that individuals may need to experience their "Aha!" moment. By communicating with other serials professionals, vendors, and publishers, I can create a strong foundation within my career. Through participation in NASIG, I will be more successful in helping create a community of learning and knowledge. Conversely, I hope to influence other individuals as they endeavor to build upon their foundations.

I have liberally and literally used the idea of serials work as being an artistic blueprint for the creation of knowledge as the foundation of understanding. This metaphor allows me to articulate my goals as a serials professional, striving to grow as a scholar through the interaction with other such professionals. Through this growth, I am confident I will gain insight into how to better tackle the pursuit of knowledge. These experiences will give me the tools to be a knowledgeable information architect for my library and its stakeholders, and my responsibility as a representative of the library as a pillar within the larger information community will deepen.